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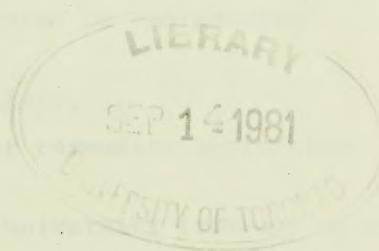
BRIEF FROM THE

ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITIES AND
COLLEGES OF CANADA

TO THE

TASK FORCE ON CANADIAN UNITY

February 1978



1. Introduction

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada is the national organization of the 68 degree-granting institutions in the ten provinces. It is of the nature of a university to be composed of many individuals who may freely hold differing views on a variety of subjects, and the institution as a whole may adopt policies which are not in accord with sister institutions. Nevertheless, there is frequently a consensus arrived at through dialogue between the institutions. It is to these common problems and opinions that the Association addresses itself, and it is in this sense that the Association represents and speaks for its voluntary member institutions.

2. The University and the context of this brief

The modern university is usually called on by society to fulfil several functions, such as

- that of an institution where society carries on scholarly and intellectual work; and educates others to do so;
- that of an institution where research for the increase of knowledge is carried out;
- that of an accessible repository of knowledge, facts, data, volumes, artifacts, documents, collections, etc.;
- the training of those professionals of which society has need;
- responding with its expertise and apparatus to emergencies and crises;
- performing specialized services for society;
- acting as a center and resource bank for community activities.

It is not possible to divorce a modern university from any of these functions. Now some of them are essentially local in character. However others, by their very nature, are much wider in scope and require a very large theatre. In the Canadian context some of these latter activities have always transcended the boundaries of the current provincial jurisdictions.

Accordingly, as the Task Force addresses itself to the questions

of Canadian Unity and of possible modifications to the constitution, it should concern itself with the effects of such transformations on the universities if these are to be preserved.

3. The basic requirements

We recall briefly that whatever the political context or jurisdiction there are basic conditions which must be met if a university is to exist as such. These have been summarized by the International Association of Universities as corresponding to three freedoms. A university must be free to decide

- who shall teach: appointments
- what shall be taught: curriculae
- who shall be taught: admission

To these the recent (August 1977) Toronto meeting of the International Council for the Future of the University added the following affirmations:

1. That the university must never be a partisan, but rather a critic, of any creed or party;
2. That political criteria are inadmissible for admission to the academy and for setting academic goals and standards;
3. That it is disastrous to structure the governance of the university on adversary principles that are inherently conducive to conflict;
4. That scholars must have the full and unfettered right to speak and think freely and must be protected from class disruption, intimidation and, where this is the case, actual violence.

We ask the Task Force to remember that in any constitutional modifications proposed, the spirit of these conditions must be respected.

4. Specific requirements

An on-going consideration of their many challenges and problems over the years has led Canadian Universities to identify a number of areas connected with their non-local roles where much cooperation and collaboration

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is necessary. Several of these have been mentioned previously to various governments on different occasions. We outline here, briefly, some illustrative examples.

- a) Centres of Concentration All Canadian universities cannot be excellent in all fields. Yet the people of Canada require expertise in almost all fields. Hence the need (already being slowly fulfilled) for the specialization in some fields by some universities in such a way that there is ready access to these centers by students and scholars from all over the country. The dimension of this need exceeds the capacity of any one Canadian province. This question is taken up in detail in the Association's "Bonneau-Corry" report.
- b) Libraries and Collections No Canadian university or provincial grouping of universities has an adequate library or library system. Hence there has been considerable work done in specializing and in organizing lending networks and systems. For this to work complete freedom of communication and mobility is necessary.
- c) Computers A similar situation, mutatis mutandis, attains for certain uses of computers as attains for libraries.
- d) Student Mobility The lack of the resources necessary to teach all fields in all provinces plus the principle of academic freedom underline the need for student mobility, and the need to mitigate gross differences in admission requirements, fee differentials, etc.
- e) Staff Mobility (nationally and internationally) The free interchange of ideas is a major contribution of universities to society. The injection of new ideas and the avoidance of sterile inbreeding have thus always been of concern to universities. These desiderata are achieved by maintaining a high mobility for staff. This mobility is also an important part of the academic freedom of each staff member. There are barriers to such mobility (immigration laws, portability of pension funds, etc.) which universities have been working to reduce over the years. This reduction must continue.
- f) Major Installations No province of Canada can afford all of the major installations required for research either in fundamental subjects or in applied fields of interest to its economy. Hence the need for close cooperation, mobility, and accessibility to such common or shared installations.
- g) Canadian Studies The Association's recent "Symons Report" on this subject has attracted wide attention. There is now much activity being deployed to implement many of its recommendations. Some of these require much inter-university collaboration all over the country. In particular, an improved knowledge of the complete history of Canada and of the nature and potential of its regions would assist in eliminating much of the misunderstanding and mistrust that is prevalent.

- h) University Stability The health of a university thus depends to a large extent, in Canada, on the cooperation and collaboration of a great many, and on the general well-being of the many. Thus if a given region of the country were to undergo passing or special economic difficulties, and the universities situated there were to suffer directly and immediately, the local population might be unduly affected far into the future (a university is for the long term) and the well-being of the ensemble would suffer. There is thus a clear need for stabilizing elements in the system.
- i) Critical Size The allotment of limited resources is often best effected by peer judgement, a system which has withstood the test of experience and criticism. The system requires a minimum pool of expertise in many fields, a pool which is possessed by no Canadian province by itself.

From these examples it is clear that the Canadian universities require a large degree of freedom to enter into countrywide cooperation and collective projects. The Association recalls this national dimension to the Task Force and urges that it must be respected and improved by any modifications to the constitution that may be proposed.

5. The Mechanisms

Much of the cooperation between universities (and other institutions such as government ministries) has been and must be the result of dialogue amongst the institutions themselves. The Association exists, in part, to promote and facilitate this dialogue.

However there are many other legitimate interests in this planning: local, provincial, regional and national. In particular, the provincial governments are responsible for most of the direct financing of universities, and their primary responsibility to their electorates is the prudent administration of resources in the provincial interest. In this context, the long-term health of universities, and their need for extra-provincial ties is just beginning to be perceived. There are also many questions of an inter-provincial and supra-provincial nature which, at government level, are being handled either by the various Federal Government agencies, or by the recently-formed Council of Ministers of Education of Canada.

It is clear that there is much room here for duplication and waste

on the one hand, and oversight and neglect on the other. Coordination and a better defining of jurisdictions are required. Elements of solution in the current context are expounded in the Association's Planning for Planning report.

In its consideration of possible modifications in the Canadian constitution, the Task Force is respectfully urged to consider the problem of suitable jurisdiction for all of the universities' dimensions, and of the mechanisms necessary for planning and coordination at the governments' level.

6. The Ageing Faculty

Less than ten years ago, Canadian universities in response to Canadian needs had to import wholesale a large number of faculty members and researchers to satisfy the basic needs of Canadian youth. Today we find ourselves in a position of having so much talent trained and ready to take on the task of educating the upcoming generations that the Canadian universities can no longer accommodate them all. On a short term basis, this means that Canadians are turning away from graduate studies or turning away from employment in Canada. At the same time, the funds available for research have decreased in absolute purchasing power.

Since we can foresee the possibility of a significant decrease in the number of students over the next fifteen years at all levels of higher education, it is more than possible that at the end of that period we will have failed to develop the quality and number of teachers and researchers required to maintain Canada at the forefront of higher education when the current generation begins to retire. It is essential that in the next few years sound decisions be made both in the allocation of resources to our universities and in the selection of topics for research so as to establish a national resource pool that will be ready to take on the task after this period of decrease in numbers.

The AUCC therefore urges both levels of government to understand and recognize the long-term needs of the country as well as the current needs of each of the provinces.

7. The Two Languages

For the more than twenty years that the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada has had a permanent secretariat, its policy has been to operate in as fully bilingually fashion as possible. The reality at times has fallen short of its ambitions, but the AUCC has striven and continues to strive for a functional ability to handle either of the two languages of Canada. Since the quiet revolution in the early 1960 brought back to the consciousness of Canadians that there was a rapidly developing and thriving Quebec, the issue of French for Canadians has been in the forefront on the news and of discussions at all levels and in all segments of society. In the last few years, there have been increased discussion to reinstitute second language requirements in a number of our universities. General consensus seems to be emerging on two points:

- (1) university educated Canadians should be expected to acquire a basic familiarity with both official languages; and,
- (2) it is more important to encourage than to force students to acquire this facility.

The essence is that the French language and those who speak it must be made to feel that they are an integral part of this country and contribute to its particular character.

The Association holds that the provision of facilities for the acquiring of both languages by university graduates is a national concern.

8. Conclusion

The Association holds that the Canadian universities, which by and large have good reputations on the international scene, are among the institutions which can be most affected in the long term by any modifications proposed in the Canadian constitution, or by any modification in the scheme of national unity.

It respectfully requests the Task Force to attach the greatest importance to this dimension of the current Canadian reality and to consider the well-being of the universities in the long term as being a matter of great urgency for the Canadian people.

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